

The Community in the Minds and Behavior of the Russian Peasantry in the Context of the Reforms and Revolutions in the First Third of the Twentieth Century

Olga Sukhova

Penza State University, Penza, Russia

e-mail: savtemp@yandex.ru

Received January 20, 2022; revised March 15, 2022; accepted March 15, 2022

Abstract—The representations of the community and communality in the minds and behavior of the Russian peasantry are studied. The author analyzes the change in the functionality and features of the evolution of models of solidarized behavior in the context of reforms and revolutions in Russia/the Soviet Union at the end of the 19th and the first third of the 20th centuries. The socio-political interaction in the community—state opposition is seen as a manifestation of the reactions of open systems to external challenges and the desire to maintain a state of equilibrium, to adapt and/or to resist. The thesis about the conditionality of the repetition of the cycles of the revival of the community is substantiated by the institutionalization of the self-organization of the local community in order to achieve and protect vital interests. The key factor in the death of the community in the early 1930s is revealed: the formation of a special system of administrative management, excluding any opportunities for the self-organization of the peasantry. The analysis of the evolution of self-regulation practices regulated by law and tradition—the institutions of the rural assembly and land redistribution—is of considerable interest. One of the significant aspects of the problem is the consideration of the entire arsenal of the means of social resistance of the community, including the most radical forms related to manifestations of social aggression.

Keywords: Community and communality, Russian peasantry in the first third of the 20th century, community revolution, features of social behavior, collectivization

DOI: 10.1134/S1019331622090118

The pattern of the Russian landed community owes its birth largely to the romantic perception and academic reading of the famous German economist A. Haxthausen, who visited Russia in 1843 and published materials on the internal relations of people's life on the eve of the peasant reform.¹ From that moment on, the protection of traditional institutions, which reflected the universe of national identity, the archetypal foundations of which absorbed the fundamental foundations of Christianity and the primary ideas about the family, and tribal nature of power-submission relations, has become of particular importance for Russian intellectuals. And as the sandcastles of Russian modernization were erected and collapsed, the discussion was revived on the special path of Russian civilization, the limits and possibilities of cultural adaptation, and the community as a unique form of appeasemen, pp.t, solidarity, and integration of society at the sharp turning points of epochs.

¹ *Haxthausen A. von.* Studies of the internal relations of a people's life and especially rural institutions in Russia. Vol. 1. M., 1870. XXII.

The historical purpose of the community in the era of the Great Reforms was seen as ensuring the continuity of changes, the time factor necessary for the assimilation of a new order of life, and the familiar system of communications, which allowed broadcasting undistorted meanings and contributed to the consolidation of new value orientations and behavioral strategies in the mass consciousness. The significance of such a set of functions is also confirmed by a modern cultural anthropology.²

Understanding the concept of the community, one way or another presented in a wider range of maxims about the role of the state and land ownership³, has gradually acquired an evidence base in the form of ethnographic reviews and descriptions⁴ and formed into

² *Medushevsky A.N.* Agrarian reform projects in Russia: XVIII—beginning of the XXI century. M., 2005. P. 141.

³ *Alaev L.B.* What was the “Russian community” and what is the “Russian communality” // *History and modernity*. 2014. No. 2. P. 47.

⁴ State Archive of the Russian Federation (SARF). F. 586. D. 1, vv. 115, 119, and others; *Russian peasants. Life. Daily. Morals: materials of the “Ethnographic Bureau” of Prince V.N. Denisov*. St. Petersburg, 2004, etc.

independent areas of research practice, among which the issues of genesis, secular self-organization, and the legal culture of the Russian peasantry should be highlighted.⁵

In Soviet historiography, the apparent anachronism of the institution of the community and the justification for the need to break tradition led to a long period when the fundamental problem of Russian civilization was forgotten. In this context, the collapse of the patriarchal order was an indicator of the progress of socioeconomic development.⁶ The time of the historical rehabilitation of worldly self-organization, the “communal turn” should be attributed to the 1970s, when a self-sufficient subject area was formed within the given ideological limits for studying the era of the formation and evolution of the social institution.⁷ Almost simultaneously, the experience of the communal world order was projected onto Soviet history. The thesis of the retraditionalization and archaization of social systems in the postrevolutionary era was first substantiated by V.P. Danilov.⁸

Methodological pluralism in the 1990s and anthropologization of historical science predetermined the rapid growth of interest in the phenomenon of the community, read in the context of autarchy and, at the same time, a source that projects the corresponding attitudes of consciousness onto the level of the macrosystem. The concept of a “communal archetype”, which arose from the common solidarity ethos and egalitarianism and formed the basic component of the social system of Russia throughout its history, was consolidated by L.V. Danilova in the Russian historiographic tradition.⁹ According to researchers, the vitality of worldly stereotypes was so high that even in post-reform Russia, with a clear understanding by the peasants that “...the community with its redistribution, alternation, three-field farming with forced crop rotation, the supreme command of the world over all lands, mutual responsibility, and absorption of the individual community stood in the way of agrotechni-

cal and social progress, the village held on to this medieval institution as an anchor of salvation.”¹⁰

In the modern historiography of the problem, the conceptualization of a number of research strategies is obvious, among which the three most significant ones should be singled out: first of all, the analysis of the community as an indicator of the civilizational matrix, including a wide range of assessments ranging from lamentations over the fate of the Russian peasantry and the constitution of the communal world order to an angry rebuff to the savagery and inertia of the latter.¹¹

The problem of the historical conditionality of the Stalinist project of the agrarian revolution largely influenced the formation of a sustainable research interest in the fate of the peasant community in the postrevolutionary era.¹² In recent decades, this has been one of the most sought-after areas of research. A notable phenomenon in Russian historiography was the monograph by S.A. Esikov, dedicated to the systematic analysis of the Soviet village in the context of the implementation of the new economic policy.¹³ Reflecting on the alternatives of the agrarian development of the Soviet Union, the author turns to the definition of the community from the standpoint of the correspondence of this historically established form of land sharing and peasant self-organization to the tasks of developing the cooperative movement and the soviet form of local self-government. On the materials of Tambov province, S.A. Esikov reveals a wide range of strategies for adapting the community world order to a new format of relations in the power-subordination system: from a clearly defined isolation and delineation of the functionality of land societies and village councils to their merger, turning the latter into executive bodies, and the administration of community self-government.¹⁴

⁵ Matveev P. Essays on the people's legal life of Samara province. St. Petersburg, 1877; Efimenko A. Studies of a people's life // Issue. I. Common law. M., 1884; Kachorovsky K. People's Law. M., 1906; Kaufman A. On the question of the origin of the Russian land community. M., 1907; Kornilov A.A. Peasant system. Vol. I. St. Petersburg, 1905; Preobrazhensky F.A.. Questions of peasant self-government. Rural institutions and officials. M., 1893, etc.

⁶ Simonova M.S. Cancellation of mutual responsibility // Historical notes. Vol. 83. M., 1969, pp. 159–195.

⁷ Aleksandrov V.A. Rural community in Russia (XVII–early XIX century). M., 1976.

⁸ Danilov V.P. On the historical fate of the Russian peasant community // Yearbook of agrarian history: Problems of the history of the Russian community. Vologda, 1976, pp. 102–134.

⁹ Danilova L.V. Rural community in medieval Russia. M., 1994, pp. 59–60, 308.

¹⁰ Danilova L.V. and Danilov V.P. Peasant mentality and community // Mentality and agrarian development of Russia (XIX–XX centuries): Materials of the international Conf., Moscow, June 14–15, 1994. M., 1996. P. 25.

¹¹ Gromyko M.M. The world of the Russian village. M., 1991; Bezgin V.B. Congregation in the everyday life of the Russian village of the late XIX century. (based on the materials of the Ethnographic Bureau of Prince V.N. Denishev) // Actual problems of the agrarian history of Eastern Europe: sources and research methods. 2011. No. 1, pp. 205–212; Vronsky O.G. State power of Russia and the peasant community in the years of “great upheavals” (1905–1917). M., 2000; and others.

¹² Kondrashin V.V. Peasant community and forced collectivization: on the reasons for the success of the Stalinist “revolution from above” in the Soviet countryside // Yearbook on the agrarian history of Eastern Europe. 2019: Problems of agrarian development of Russia in the XIV–XX centuries. Voronezh, 2020. P. 202.

¹³ Esikov S.A. The Russian Village in the Years of NEP: On the Question of Alternatives to Stalinist Collectivization (Based on Materials from the Central Chernozem Region). M., 2010.

¹⁴ Esikov S.A. The Russian village in the years of the New Economic Policy: on the question of an alternative to Stalinist collectivization (based on materials from the Central Chernozem Region) M., 2010, pp. 127–128.

The dualism of manifestations of self-organization and the utilitarian nature of the perception of power in peasant everyday life served as the base for the conceptualization of the concept of the Soviet community, which acted as a factor in stabilizing the Soviet political system and ensuring loyalty to the Bolshevik regime on the part of the peasantry.¹⁵ In support of this thesis, the authors provide evidence of the preservation and even strengthening by the mid-1920s of the absolute priority of the assembly in the system of rural management (despite the legislative delineation of the powers of village councils and land societies, the consolidation of village councils, etc.).¹⁶

In contrast, in the opinion of V.V. Kondrashin, the peasant community appears as a “weapon of resistance,” an organizing force, an instrument for protecting peasant interests from state encroachments, and, therefore, an obstacle that was destroyed during the period of collectivization.¹⁷

The third direction could be called critical, claiming a complete break with the established concept of the traditionalism of community organization, but this does not resolve the core of the problem. A more accurate definition of the approach of the famous orientalist and community theorist L.B. Alaev¹⁸ is given by an institutional and integrative model of social interaction that evolves in response to changes in historical conditions, fits perfectly into the systematic approach and reflects the process of the exchange of resources and information between micro- and macrosystems. One of the author’s arguments is a statement of the utilitarian manifestation of the “natural collectivism,” “communality” of the Great Russians: in Siberia, the settlers were guided not by worldly solidarity but by the individualism of the right of seizure, recalling the redistribution practice when land shortages appeared.¹⁹ Half a century of experience in the analysis of the rural community in the East and the progressive conceptualization of the problem does not allow us to doubt the validity of the main thesis of the theoretical constructions of L.B. Alaev, revealing the evolutionary mission of the community in the history of mankind: “The traditional community is nonsense. The community is always up to date We must try to

understand who needs it and why in the new historical conditions.”²⁰

Thus, the obvious watershed of research practice is the choice of a singular (single-line) or civilizational theoretical equipment. The actualization of the community pattern and the repetition of cycles of revival during periods of crisis are evidence of the institutionalization of the self-organization of the local community. In this context, synergetics seems to be the most demanded methodology, which allows describing the interaction of open systems (through the manifestation of reactions to external challenges, the desire to maintain a state of equilibrium, adaptation, and resistance).

This thesis is confirmed by the characteristics of the functional and social purpose of the communal world order. Thus, a detailed analysis of the “nomenclature” of communal functions in the process of the historical evolution of this phenomenon is presented in the well-known monograph by B.N. Mironov. The author consistently examines the manifestations of managerial, industrial, financial, tax, law-making, judicial, police, representative, social protection, cultural, educational, and religious functions.²¹ Alaev, revealing the mission of the institute, which “we call the community,”²² emphasizes the primacy and significance (depending on specific historical conditions) of a certain incentive for the development of a social community: organization of production, regulation of land use, regulation of taxation, organization of armed resistance, and ensuring the social dominance of one group of residents over others.²³

Assessing the heuristic possibilities of applying a systematic approach, we note that the embodiment of social reactions, and the process of exchanging energy and information will be specific everyday practices. New challenges appear (the introduction of a poll tax, mutual responsibility, etc.) and the community will manifest itself in adaptation reactions (reception, development, assimilation, or resistance). Consequently, the basic characteristics of the institution of the community will be the provision of vitality and the ability to communicate (“communities are created when there is a need for communication, and it can be understood as broadly as you like, but it must include

¹⁵ Yakhshiyani O.Yu., Sidorova G.M., and Kharichkin I.K. Russian Peasant Community and Soviets // Questions of History. 2020 No. 1. P. 64.

¹⁶ Yakhshiyani O.Yu., Sidorova G.M., and Kharichkin I.K. Russian Peasant Community and Soviets // Questions of History. 2020 No. 1. P. 61.

¹⁷ Kondrashin V.V. Op. cit, pp. 204–205, 212.

¹⁸ Alaev L.B. Rural community: “A novel embedded in history.” Critical analysis of the theories of the community and historical evidence of its development and role in a stratified society. M., 2016. P. 475.

¹⁹ Alaev L.B. What was the “Russian community” and what is the “Russian communality” // History and modernity. 2014. No. 2. P. 50.

²⁰ Alaev L.B. Was there a community? Interview with L.B. Alaev specifically for the publication “Religion and Society in the East,” July–August 2018 // Religion and Society in the East. 2019. No. 3, pp. 72, 75.

²¹ Mironov B.N. Social history of Russia in the period of the Empire (XVIII–early XX centuries). Genesis of personality, democratic family, civil society, and the rule of law. In 2 volumes. Vol. I. SPb., 1999, pp. 467–473.

²² Alaev L.B. Rural agricultural neighborhood communities: logic vs history // VOSTOK (ORIENS). 2020. No. 4. P. 122.

²³ Alaev L.B. Rural agricultural neighborhood communities: logic vs history // VOSTOK (ORIENS). 2020. No. 4. P. 122.

cultural communication”).²⁴ In this vein, the democratism and egalitarianism of the community is explained “not by the mystical “communal spirit” but by the desperate situation in which the village finds itself.”²⁵ The range of manifestations of social reactions, communal consciousness, and behavior is inexhaustible, as is the set of tools, forms of expression, and transmission of meanings in the verbal and behavioral aspects (hearing, folklore, complaints, lynching, arson, uprisings, etc.), but, perhaps, it is the methods of communication and the content of the transmitted information that are of decisive importance in the study of the community as a self-organization of the peasantry throughout its history.

Nonetheless, in the social behavior of the peasantry until the early 1930s, a certain specificity of choice and targeting of social reactions are observed. We are talking about the rootedness and stability of the tribal consciousness, ascending in historical retrospect to blood relations and explaining the perception of “strangers.”²⁶ According to S.V. Lurie, the dominance of tribal consciousness can be traced at least to the second half of the 19th century.²⁷ The thesis about the historical continuity of the charter of a social organization at the level of a patriarchal family and a rural community, which was explained by “... the blood origin from the same clan,” is also found in the studies of contemporaries.²⁸ Moreover, the preservation, and even, the conservation of the common corporate characteristics of consciousness and egalitarianism, which represented the basic components of the medieval social system in the postreform period was also pointed out by Danilova.²⁹

Confirmation of this is easily found in the content of proverbs and sayings, as well as small folklore forms, that grew out of the interpretation of medieval collections of sayings and reflected the core of popular perception. The imperatives of the peasant consciousness, represented by the statements “the world is a great man,”³⁰ “Who will be greater than the world?”, and “The world is judged by one god”³¹ express not only the omnipotence of the community and its sacred

nature but also prescribe the algorithm of action and reflect the prevailing stereotypes of behavioral reactions aimed at protecting and restoring the vitality of peasant life. As one of the distinguishing features of peasant psychology, the authors of Notes of Various Persons pointed to a sharp change in the behavior of the peasant at home and in the “assembly”: “At home, he is quieter than water, lower than grass, when he appears in society, he raises his voice.”³²

Among the most effective mechanisms of (legal) self-regulation regulated by law and tradition are the institution of rural assemblies and the practice of land redistribution. At the same time, one should take into account the dualism of peasant meetings, expressed by a combination of a formal (administrative) function and the need to organize the daily life of the community. In particular, the correspondents of the Ministry of Internal Affairs from the Penza and Saratov provinces at the end of the 19th century recorded the facts of the demonstrative sabotage of the interests of the community by the peasantry. Despite the threat of arrest due to nonappearance, many community members hid from the administrator-leader of the assembly. In this case, the meeting was postponed indefinitely, until the headman himself went to reason with the community members (“drive” them to the meeting).³³ However, the motives for such a reaction are easily explained either by the time of the event (on Sundays and the harvest season), or by the unwillingness to make decisions that worsen the situation of the peasants. The usual practice was the low attendance of the peasants at the assembly in the event of a discussion of the issue of arrears (“if they demand something from them”). If the assembly was convened “in favor of the peasants” (“some kind of “favor” was announced, questions were discussed about hiring a shepherd, electing a village and church elder, etc.), the turnout was high; let us add one more incentive, the anticipation of a “treat” (elections of the village administration, as a rule, could not do without drinking: “it was assumed that a strong drink would be offered” at the end of the assembly).³⁴ Among the manifestations of the function of social protection, one should include a solidarized form of decision-making (“you will not go against the world”). Even if there were peasants who disagreed with the decision taken at the meeting, they usually either joined the majority or abstained from voting. The peasants themselves explained this feature of their behavior by the need to protect common interests. An unknown author in his correspondence cites, in his words, a certain norm of life: at one of the assemblies, the zemstvo chief asked the peasants to divide into two groups (for and against the well-known decision): the peasants

²⁴Alaev L.B. Was there a community? Interview with Alaev especially for the publication “Religion and Society in the East”, July–August 2018 // Religion and Society in the East. 2019. No. 3. P. 75.

²⁵Alaev L.B. Rural agricultural neighborhood communities: logic vs history // VOSTOK (ORIENS). 2020. No. 4. P. 122.

²⁶Medushevsky A.N. Agrarian reform projects in Russia: XVIII–beginning of the XXI century. M., 2005. P. 145.

²⁷Lurie S.V. How the Russian community perished // Peasantry and industrial civilization. M., 1993, pp. 137, 152.

²⁸Matveev P. Essays on the people’s legal life of Samara province. SPb., 1877. P. 26.

²⁹Danilova L.V. Rural community in medieval Russia. M., 1994. P. 308.

³⁰The Peasant Movement in Russia in 1857–1861 M., 1963. P. 419.

³¹Dal V.I. Proverbs of the Russian people. M., 2002. P. 253.

³²SARF. F. 586. D. 1. V. 115. P. 4.

³³SARF. F. 586. D. 1. V. 119. P. 9a.

³⁴SARF. F. 586. D. 1. V. 115, pp. 19, 39.

flatly refused: “If we split up, you will overpower us”³⁵ (for comparison: “One is scared, but everyone (the world) is not scared”; “There is no one to blame in the world”).³⁶

In the postreform era, in the face of growing signs of a systemic crisis, the inevitable reactualization of the communal archetype will take place. In particular, I.V. Chernyshev, analyzing the questionnaires of the Free Economic Society, points to a sharp increase in interest in land equalization in the provinces of the Central Black Earth region and the Middle Volga region, the involvement of most of the communities in the redistribution in 1895–1906.³⁷ “Researchers related the revitalization of the community” (as a manifestation of interest in land redistribution) in the late XIX and early XX centuries to the growth in the scale of peasant land use, the “rise in the cost of land,” and population growth.³⁸ Under these conditions, multihomesteads became a characteristic feature of rural settlements, which further strengthened the need for the peasantry to coordinate their actions. The conclusions drawn by K. Kachorovsky are confirmed by the analysis of materials from 87 000 rural communities (up to 25 million people of both sexes).³⁹

Having recorded the increase in the intensity of the equalization and redistribution function of the community, the author indirectly points to the reflection of the peasant consciousness in relation to modernization: the fact that from 1870 to 1900 the number of communities with consumer rationing systems increased in Saratov province from 15 (0.6%) to 1062 (41.3%) and the number of “dead” or “almost dead” (i.e., with the visible absence of redistribution) decreased from 1635 (63.6%) to 864 (33.6%) is in favor of the vitality of the community. Moreover, such tendencies were typical not only for former landowners but also for the state peasants (to an even greater extent).⁴⁰ The most important factor in the reactualization of the “communal archetype” is the reduction of social tension, which is inevitable when carrying out communal redistributions. Initially some individual householders opposed the redistribution: they lay down under the plows, did not let them plow the fields, complained to the authorities, and in some cases there were fights and even murders; however, with the subsequent redistributions, there were fewer cases of resistance, and eventually the resistance evaporated.⁴¹

³⁵SARF. F. 586. D. 1. V. 134. P. 37.

³⁶*Dal V.I.* Proverbs of the Russian people. M., 2002. P. 253.

³⁷*Chernyshev I.V.* The community after the decree of November 9, 1906 Part 1. M., 1917.

³⁸*Kachorovsky K.* Peasant community in Saratov province // Russian wealth. 1901. No. 11, pp. 138–139.

³⁹*Kachorovsky K.* People’s Law. M., 1906, pp. 20–24.

⁴⁰*Kachorovsky K.* Peasant community in Saratov province ..., pp. 122–123.

⁴¹*Kachorovsky K.* Peasant community in Saratov province ..., pp. 131–132.

Communities with redistributions continued to dominate in the Central Agricultural and Middle Volga regions and by the time the decree of November 9, 1906 was adopted. According to I.V. Chernyshev, who processed the questionnaires of the All-Russian Economic Association of 1910 and 1911, 83 percent of 397 communities, on which information was available, had redistributed their land and only 7.7% of the communities had not redistributed their land.⁴² Materials of the fund of the Zemsky Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, introduced into scientific circulation by A.M. Anfimov and A.P. Korelin, testify to the absence of conversion in more than 58% of communities in 40 provinces of Russia at the beginning of the 20th century. These data allowed V.G. Tyukavkin confirmed that the Stolypin agrarian reform was prepared by the refusal of many communities to redistribute their land.⁴³ A significant correction should be made in favor of the regional aspect of the problem: redistributions were maintained where the quality of the soil still acted as a guarantor of vitality. Therefore, the percentage of communities without land redistribution in the Penza, Saratov, and Nizhny Novgorod provinces was less than 33%, while in Yaroslavl and Novgorod this figure exceeded 85%.⁴⁴ In a word, we are again dealing with a unique combination of factors of time and space: the fate of the community was determined by its utilitarian interpretation by the peasants. This will clearly manifest itself in the conditions of a social explosion and the collapse of statehood in Russia. The subjects of almost all verdicts and petitions, as well as the vast majority of orders and telegrams sent to the upper echelons of power during the first Russian revolution, were rural and volost assemblies.⁴⁵

The revolution of 1917, which buried the Russian empire and brought to life the most archaic practices of self-organization, was immediately “read” by the peasantry, and in the context of the semiotics of culture, it turned out to be the most favorable environment for the manifestation of communal solidarity. The possibility of social restructuring was reinforced in the minds of the peasantry by a firm conviction in the inevitability and irrevocability of the realization of the ideal developed by the centuries-old utopian tradition, the ideal of “Truth,” which anticipated the establishment of the perfect state of the human race on Earth. This idea was in popular perception “an original and enduring heritage”, “...not a chimera, not

⁴²For details, see *Chernyshev I.V.* Community after November 9, 1906. In 2 parts. Pg., 1917.

⁴³*Tyukavkin V.G.* Great Russian peasantry and the Stolypin agrarian reform. M., 2001, pp. 171–173.

⁴⁴*Tyukavkin V.G.* The Great Russian peasantry and the Stolypin agrarian reform. M., 2001. P. 173.

⁴⁵*Bukhovets O.G.* Social conflicts and peasant mentality in the Russian Empire at the beginning of the 20th century: New materials, methods, and results. M., 1996. P. 74.

imaginary, but a real heritage, forcibly alienated, however, and to be returned by rightful ownership.”⁴⁶ It was this consistency of meanings that caused such an incredible craving for unity of action: “The first to attend the largest congress of the all-Russian level were representatives of the most downtrodden and “inert” class.”⁴⁷

Moreover, the most largest flow of social activity in 1917–1918, and, possibly, even up to 1922, reliably fits into the concept of a “communal revolution.” At the same time, the so-called “committee” period in the history of the formation of the new revolutionary government does not change the core of the problem: regardless of the decisions taken by the provincial peasant congresses (the establishment of committees of people’s power in Samara province, councils of rural representatives in Saratov, etc.), the practice of electing rural administration retained its traditional character and did not cause any serious break in the ideas of the corporate consciousness.⁴⁸

In the Penza province, the “people’s right” was announced on May 15, 1917 and was dressed in the form of a resolution of the second provincial Peasants’ Congress regarding “temporary” measures “to use fallow lands and meadow plots until the convocation and resolution of the land issue by the Constituent Assembly and to take measures to account for privately owned dead and living inventory and its distribution among those in need. In many districts, the resolution was welcomed “as a long-desired way to resolve land relations and, at the same time, a legal way, as recommended by the congress, which in their opinion, was competent to finally decide these matters.”⁴⁹ In some districts of Penza province, the decisions of the second Peasants’ Congress become a truly decisive factor in the growth of “aspirations to seize land,” and in May–June “the fallow lands of the owners were taken under control by the volost committees and distributed among the needy peasants.”⁵⁰ Moreover, the volost committees in this case became the first instance, in which the “right of all workers to the land” was formalized.⁵¹ At one time, summing up the results of the first decade of Soviet power, A. V. Shestakov lamented

the lack of initiative on the part of the peasantry in organizing soviets, which, in his opinion, were most often “planted from the district and province.”⁵²

Thus, in June 1917, the authorities were forced to state the almost complete implementation of the utopian program of the peasants: the “black redistribution.” As the participants in the “Constituent Assembly of the Penza Land Committee” noted, “the restoration of the rights of owners to land is impossible, because these rights have actually been destroyed”; “it is impossible to change the decision of May 15, since it has already been implemented.”⁵³

The sacralized mythology of the “black redistribution,” supported by the decisions of the peasant congresses, gradually strengthened the purpose of the assembly as the primary and supreme source of the people’s revolutionary law, competent to decide the issue of seizing all privately owned lands. Thus, in the course of a survey conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture in the spring and summer of 1917 in Penza province, the respondents discovered the exceptional position of the assembly as a source of lawmaking. Of the 264 questionnaires, in which the column recording the existence of verdicts to solve the agrarian issue in the village was filled in, 217 questionnaires (82.2%) stated that the decision on unauthorized plowing of privately owned land was taken at a village assembly.⁵⁴

The logic of the “communal revolution” dictated the establishment of egalitarianism not only through land equalization but also through the practices of social discrimination and domination over “outsiders,” which were often demonstrative. By analogy with land, surpluses (due to the fact that the land had been taken) of “living and dead inventory” were subject to strict accounting and control, and then distribution. The postponement of the final division of the ownership of property allowed the peasants to interpret the concept of “use” in a very broad but pragmatic way. In the Nizhnelomovsky district of Penza province, according to the Commissioner of the Provisional Government G. S. Unkovsky, by July 1917, the lands were “taken over” completely in four volosts: Verkhnelomovskaya, Andreevskaya, Titovskaya, and Adikaevskaya; to a large extent in Poroshevskaya, Bolshe-Verkhovskaya, Karmishenskaya, and Voronskaya; and through conciliatory negotiations in the following volosts: Dolgorukovskaya, Golitsinskaya, Arshinovskaya, and Virginskaya; however, the horses are not “taken” home, but “taken to work,” and in the evening they are returned to the owner “to feed.”⁵⁵

⁴⁶ *Klibanov A. I.* People’s social utopia in Russia. Period of feudalism. M., 1977. P. 9.

⁴⁷ *Buldakov V. P.* Red Trouble: The nature and consequences of revolutionary violence. M., 2010, pp. 184–185.

⁴⁸ *Kravchuk N. A.* Mass peasant movement in Russia on the eve of October. M., 1971. P. 96; *Buldakov V. P.* Red troubles, pp. 183, 187.

⁴⁹ SARF. F. 1788. D. 1. V. 123. P. 82

⁵⁰ *Sedov A. V.* Peasant committees of the Middle Volga region in the struggle for land on the eve of the October Revolution // Questions of agrarian history of the Middle Volga region (XVII–start of XX century). Interuniversity. coll. of scientific works. Saransk, 1979. P. 173.

⁵¹ State Archive of the Penza Region (SAPR). F. 206. D. 1. V. 45. P. 6.

⁵² *Shestakov A. V.* Peasant organizations in 1917 // Agrarian revolution. In 4 volumes. Vol. 2. M., 1928, pp. 116, 152, 154.

⁵³ SAPR. F. 206. D. 1. V. 4. P. 281.

⁵⁴ SAPR. F. 486. D. 1, vv. 33–41.

⁵⁵ SAPR. F. 486. D. 1. V. 123. P. 106.

G.A. Gerasimenko gives examples of restrictions on the rights of peasants who consolidated their land into personal property to participate in solving issues of rural management at the assembly or to create independent societies. In the spring of 1917, the villagers of Verkhneye Dobrinka, Kamyshinsky district, Saratov province, with the sanction of the provincial commissioner, decided to form their own board and elected their own headman. However, the volost committee arrested the “cutters” headman, took away his seal, and disbanded the village government.⁵⁶

Affirmation of the sacred function of the dominance of the “generic ethical consciousness”⁵⁷ could often lead to the emergence of irreconcilable contradictions within rural society, including manifestations of social aggression, bordering on the practice of lynching. A good illustration is given by the situation in Vyazovka, Gorodishchensky district, Penza province in November 1917. In the immediate vicinity of the village there were farm plots acquired by peasants through the mediation of the Peasant Land Bank. As early as March 1917, the first excesses related to the allocated members were recorded here, and on November 11, the people in Vyazovka resorted to pogroms. It is noteworthy that those taking part in the pogroms mainly consisted of prosperous communal peasants and soldiers, “who came on vacation and deserters,” with a total of more than 100 people (in total, there were 367 householders in the village). The village committee took a wait-and-see position in this case. The growth of pogrom sentiments led to a split in society into “wealthy” proponents of violence and opponents of violence, the “poor residents.” As noted in the report of the police chief of the 2nd district of Gorodishchensky district, on November 14, the peasants who “took part in the robbery, forced the whole society to participate in the robbery of the farmers, and threatened to kill them. They took away the seal from the village head by violence and drew up a verdict on behalf of the whole society on their consent to rob the farmers. At the assembly, K. Zaitsev read some kind of appeal, which called on the people to rob the farmers.”⁵⁸ The organizers of the pogroms on November 11–14 included sergeant major K. Zaitsev, as well as G. Lukmazova, P. Bayguzova, and others, who are “wealthy” peasants. The result of the village confrontation was a real “civil war,” on the scale of one village, which ended in the destruction of about 50 houses and claimed the lives of at least two people.⁵⁹

The documents testify that the peasants often acted even more radically against the peasant cutters than was suggested by the resolutions of the congress and

the orders of the volost committees, which recommended only limiting the size of their land ownership to the labor norm.⁶⁰ Most of the land of the farmers and cutters entered the general redistribution. As reported in local reports received by the Penza provincial commissar, with private owners “it was relatively easier to resolve conflicts; it was more difficult with small owners or farmers, cutters ...” (Insarsky district),⁶¹ and “numerous disputes with landowners” were settled mostly peacefully and were of the nature “at least in the form of voluntary transactions” (Saransky district).⁶² “The situation was sadder with the farmers and cutters...”: the lands of the peasant owners were seized without a trace and put into general redistribution, regardless of the size of the farm, and even in cases where the area of the land allotment did not exceed the “labor norm” and amounted to 2–3 dessiatines. At the same time, usually the society that seized the farmstead land for public use included the cutters-owners in the community and allotted them a share equally with others, perceiving such seizures as “an act of restoring the violated justice, in their opinion, in relation to the community and under the influence of the agitation of outsiders.”⁶³ An interesting precedent was created in the Salovskaya volost of Penza district. Here, up to June 1917, the peasants en masse seized only cut-off lands, while privately owned land remained untouched.⁶⁴ According to G.A. Gerasimenko, in 74 volosts of Saratov province, where there were cut-off plots and khutors, by the end of October 1917, the cut-offs and khutors were completely eliminated and their owners were included in the community, giving them allotment plots that were not larger than the norm that was given to each community member.⁶⁵

The tidal wave of the “communal revolution” swallowed up almost completely all forms of land use other than the traditional one. By the end of the 1920s, over 90% of the land in the RSFSR was cultivated by communities. In Penza province, the scale of equalization was the most impressive: here the communal form of land use reached 98.8%.⁶⁶

The attempts to reform local self-government, undertaken by the revolutionary authorities, did not shake the omnipotence of the rural assembly: the creation of a volost zemstvo unit, and after that, the

⁵⁶Gerasimenko G.A. Grassroot peasant organizations in 1917 and the first half of 1918. Saratov, 1974. P. 61.

⁵⁷Lurie S.V. How the Russian community perished ... P. 137.

⁵⁸SAPR. F. R-2840. D. 1. V. 69. P. 7.

⁵⁹SAPR. F. R-2840. D. 1. V. 69, pp. 1, 4, 7.

⁶⁰SAPR. F. 206. D. 1. V. 4. P. 347.

⁶¹SAPR. F. 206. D. 1. V. 4. P. 345.

⁶²SAPR. F. 206. D. 1. V. 45. P. 8.

⁶³SAPR. F. 206. D. 1. V. 4, pp. 281, 282, 345, 348–350; V. 34, pp. 8, 30; V. 45, pp. 9, 1.

⁶⁴SAPR. F. 206. D. 1. V. 4. P. 282.

⁶⁵Gerasimenko G.A. Grassroot peasant organizations in 1917 and the first half of 1918. Saratov, 1974. P. 190.

⁶⁶Karevsky F.A. State of agriculture in the Middle Volga region in 1925–1927 // From the history of the socialist transformation of agriculture in the first years of Soviet power. Ryazan, 1979. P. 120.

establishment of a soviet system was perceived by the peasantry as external, and therefore alien to the community, forms of socio-political control, which manifested itself in the widespread behavioral patterns related to absenteeism and nihilism.⁶⁷

For example, in February 1918 in Saratov district, there was "... little organization of soviet power ... zemstvo laws prevail, in which there are right-wing socialist revolutionaries, who hinder the whole process"; similar reports were received from Volsky district of Saratov province: "...power is actually not in the hands of the soviets, but in the hands of old-style government institutions."⁶⁸ According to Gerasimenko and V.P. Semyaninov, 65 volosts of the Saratov province refused to send their delegates to the provincial congress (on November 30, 1917) for political reasons, because they did not recognize soviet power.⁶⁹

Resolutions on the organization of volost and village councils were adopted at provincial peasant congresses. In particular, in the Middle Volga region, the third Peasants' Congress in Saratov province was the first to make such a decision on November 30, 1917. On December 27, the IV provincial Peasants' Congress was held in Penza, in Samara and Simbirsk peasant congresses that adopted similar resolutions were held in January 1918.⁷⁰ Thus, the vast majority of volost soviets appeared in the countryside between January and April 1918,⁷¹ replacing the volost zemstvos that had existed for just over half-a-year.

Here are some detailed characteristics of the attitude of community members in the soviet government, presented in the questionnaires of the out-of-town department of the Penza Provincial Council. According to a respondent from the Sialeevsko-Pyatinskaya volost of Insar district, "Due to the impotence of the soviet government to satisfy the need for bread of the starving population," the attitude towards the soviet government is "hostile and distrustful, as well as towards the abolished Zemstvo."⁷² "...The population grumbles ... that the food has not been delivered"; "the people began to lose heart and say that the council was not working." Such statements were contained in the answers received from a number of volosts of Krasnoslobodsky district.⁷³ Behind the definition of the indifferent attitude of the peasants to the soviet regime, statements such as the following

were sometimes hidden: "The population does not want to listen to any authorities or organizations. Measures do not work except for brute force ..." (Grabovskaya volost of Penza district).⁷⁴ And, perhaps, the general state of the political sphere of peasant consciousness was most succinctly expressed by a respondent from the Shishkeevsky volost of Ruzaevsky district: "Because of the devastation, we are indifferent to political issues ... 'anyone can govern us, as long as they provide bread and establish order.'"⁷⁵ The "entirely sympathetic" attitude towards the Soviet authorities was explained by the "desirability" to have at least some kind of power in the volost, which would act "to improve the lives of citizens."⁷⁶ The following interpretation is also interesting: "The majority look at it as completely legitimate bosses and willingly obey it."⁷⁷

According to the accepted norms, village councils of up to 50 deputies were created in settlements with a population of over 300 people, and in villages consisting of several societies, only one council acted.⁷⁸ It must be admitted that the functionality of the council was measured almost exclusively by the sphere of administrative management, accounting, and control; all other issues of everyday life were attributed to the powers of the assembly, which only strengthened the countercultural nature of soviet power in relation to the community. Even in the field of agriculture, when stating the forms of assistance to agrarian development, we encounter only the organization of communes, artels, and partnerships.⁷⁹

Subsequently, the gains of the "communal revolution" were legitimized by the Decree on Socialization, which secured the transfer of land for the use of the working people and its distribution on an equalizing labor basis. However, certain burdens for rural communities appeared, expressed in the transfer of the right to distribute land to councils of various levels and priority for the state to allocate land to agricultural communes and partnerships.⁸⁰ The regulation on socialist land distribution of February 14, 1919 completely defined all types of individual land use as passing and obsolescent and limited the ability of individual farmers to participate in land distribution on lands of former non-labor use intended for the organization of a community farmstead.⁸¹ In accordance with this

⁶⁷ Posadsky A.V. Saratov peasantry and elections to the volost zemstvo in August–September 1917 // Questions of Peasant Studies. Issue II. Saratov, 1996. P. 142.

⁶⁸ SARF. F. 1235. D. 77. V. 6. pp. 40, 45.

⁶⁹ Gerasimenko G.A. and Semyaninov V.P. Soviet power in the countryside at the first stage of the October Revolution (based on the materials of the Volga region). Saratov, 1980. P. 38.

⁷⁰ Gerasimenko G.A. and Semyaninov V.P. Op. cit., pp. 38–40.

⁷¹ SAPR. F. R-2. D. 1. V. 90. P. 2.

⁷² SAPR. F. R-2. D. 1. V. 86. P. 4.

⁷³ SAPR. F. R-2. D. 1. V. 88, pp. 17, 23.

⁷⁴ SAPR. F. R-2. D. 1. V. 93. P. 68.

⁷⁵ SAPR. F. R-2. D. 1. V. 92. P. 4.

⁷⁶ SAPR. F. R-2. D. 1. V. 93. P. 2; V. 91. P. 36.

⁷⁷ SAPR. F. R-2. D. 1. V. 91. P. 37.

⁷⁸ Collection of decrees and resolutions on the People's Commissariat of Agriculture. 1917–1920 M., 1922. P. 150.

⁷⁹ Collection of decrees and resolutions on the People's Commissariat of Agriculture. 1917–1920 M., 1922. P. 151.

⁸⁰ Collection of decrees and resolutions on the People's Commissariat of Agriculture. 1917–1920 M., 1922, pp. 3–10.

⁸¹ Collection of decrees and resolutions on the People's Commissariat of Agriculture. 1917–1920 M., 1922. P. 62.

provision, within 8–10 years, it was planned to distribute the entire agricultural territory of Soviet Russia among the working agricultural population on an equalizing basis, first in the form of volost allotments and the redistribution of land between volosts, and then between societies, villages, and “other agricultural associations.”⁸² The natural duty to distribute land was assigned directly to the agricultural population.⁸³

The development of a long-term plan for land distribution indirectly indicated that the implementation of the utopia of the “black redistribution” did not finally solve the problem of land shortage. In Penza province, the provision of land on average increased from 6.3 to 8.65 dessiatines or from 1.05 dessiatines up to 1.48 dessiatines per person.⁸⁴ Add to this the problem of remote land, which is characteristic of a multi-homestead type of settlement, and the potential increase in profitability will be a priori impossible due to production costs caused by the remoteness of the field from the peasant estate. In the same Penza province in 1925, the average distance of a field plot from the yard was 3.18 km, and, e.g., in Orenburg it sometimes reached 25–30 km.⁸⁵

At the same time, it should be noted that the objectively grandiose plans for equalizing land distribution strengthened the role of the rural assembly and the community in the economic life of the village and contributed to the spread of land redistribution. A year later, this brought to life an administrative ban on the organization of the complete redistributions in those societies where such redistributions were recorded in 1918 and 1919 in relation to the temporary distribution of the land fund (Decree of the Council of People's Commissars of April 30, 1920).⁸⁶ Undertaking complete redistributions was assigned to the jurisdiction of the district land department and could be permitted only after the time required for a threefold alternation of crop rotation; and partial redistributions, to the jurisdiction of the volost land departments. It is noteworthy that the decree did not distinguish between the powers of the village council and society in deciding the issue of land redistributions. Petitions for permission to carry out complete redistributions were accepted by the council according to the verdict for which 2/3 of the members of the society voted.⁸⁷

Under the conditions of the Civil War and the objective difficulties (lack of staff of land departments, the threat of disruption of the existing crop rotation, etc.), the impracticability of a large-scale project to carry out a continuous equalizing land distribution became evident. The consolidation of the actually available land for the permanent use of villages and other agricultural associations was becoming the new reality. According to the decision of the Presidium of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of May 22, 1922, the further equalization of land between volosts and villages was stopped. Now land distribution could be carried out only on the initiative and by the interested population, while mandatory land distribution work, by decision of the land authorities, raised the issue of creating a fund for resettlement on vacant lands and eliminating significant intervolost and intersettlement settlement.⁸⁸

The Land Code of 1922 prolonged the preservation of the diversity of the forms and methods of land use, consolidating the practice of equalizing redistribution within the community, and confirmed the exclusivity of the powers of the assembly in relation to general issues relating to the land society as a whole.⁸⁹ The regulation of the formation of the land society itself became the fundamental norm, the key parameter of which was defined as “a set of households with common use of field lands,” including at least 15 persons of working age.⁹⁰

It should be noted that the restoration of traditional, at first glance, forms of self-organization did not end the prospects for the evolution of the peasant community. S.A. Esikov rightly points to the active participation in the activities of the assembly during the NEP period of the actors of sociocultural modernization: teachers, doctors, agronomists, and veterinarians. Thanks to the initiatives of the rural intelligentsia, the assemblies discussed the development of education, healthcare, agriculture, and development; and they took decisions on the transition to multifield land distribution, internal settlement land distribution, raising funds to support schools and hospitals, the election of sanitary commissions, etc.⁹¹ As a noticeable trend, the desire of land societies to move to a multifield system is mentioned in the report of the

⁸²Russian State Archive of Economics RSAE. F. 478. D. 7. V. 1175. P. 2.

⁸³Collection of decrees and resolutions on the People's Commissariat of Agriculture. 1917–1920 M., 1922. P. 151.

⁸⁴RSAE. F. 478. D. 7. V. 1334. P. 28.

⁸⁵Karevsky F.A. State of agriculture in the Middle Volga region in 1925–1927 // From the history of the socialist transformation of agriculture in the first years of soviet power. Ryazan, 1979, pp. 120–121.

⁸⁶Collection of decrees and resolutions on the People's Commissariat of Agriculture. 1917–1920 M., 1922, pp. 163–165.

⁸⁷Collection of decrees and resolutions on the People's Commissariat of Agriculture. 1917–1920 M., 1922. P. 164

⁸⁸RSAE. F. 478. D. 7. V. 1175, pp. 2–3.

⁸⁹Decree of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of October 30, 1922 “On the Enactment of the Land Code, adopted at the IV session of the IX convocation” <http://www.consultant.ru/cons/cgi/online.cgi?req=doc&base=ESU&n=19492#W3YOuwSYtNMVxupn> (Date of the application: 6-Feb-22)

⁹⁰Decree of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of October 30, 1922 “On the Enactment of the Land Code, adopted at the IV session of the IX convocation” <http://www.consultant.ru/cons/cgi/online.cgi?req=doc&base=ESU&n=19492#W3YOuwSYtNMVxupn> (Date of the application: 06-Feb-22)

⁹¹Esikov S.A. Op. cit. P. 126.

Ulyanovsk Provincial Land Administration for 1925.⁹² The statistical reporting of the provincial land administrations of the Middle Volga testified that by the end of 1927, over 37% of agricultural land was covered by land distribution; and 46.3%, in Samara province. Thanks to land distribution in Samara province, 28.5% of farms switched to multifield farms, the remoteness of the field from the yard was reduced by factors of 3–4, and there was a significant increase in grain yields.⁹³

The frequency of convening assemblies and meetings (plenums) of village councils was a significant moment in the strengthening of strategies and forms of community self-organization is . This subject is considered in detail in the work of O.Yu. Yakhshiyani, G.M. Sidorova, and I.K. Kharichkina.⁹⁴ According to researchers, in 1924 in the RSFSR, one village council had 6 meetings and 29 assemblies.⁹⁵ In the summer of 1925, members of the Central Control Commission of the RCP (b) were sent to the most disadvantaged areas and districts of the Soviet Union in terms of the state of party and soviet work with an inspection check. The results of the revision of the work of the grass-roots apparatus (at the rural and volost levels) turned out to be disappointing. It was noted that “soviet organizations have almost no connection with the population. The issues that the peasantry lives on and which are most important for the peasants, namely, land distribution, forestry, resettlement, school, agronomy, veterinary medicine, are not dealt with by the workers of the soviets” (Penza province).⁹⁶ In Vladimir province, “the absent village council is almost everywhere replaced by an assembly, at which all public affairs are decided in the old fashioned way”; “the assembly is in charge,” the work of the village council is limited to the implementation of administrative and tax tasks, as well as the collection of statistical information.⁹⁷ As noted in a private letter from the Penza provincial committee in April 1926, “Sometimes one chairman of the Council works, and the chairman turns into a

‘headman of the old order’”; that is how “the peasants address him.”⁹⁸

The change of priorities and the state’s attack on the rights of the community occurs as the grain procurement crisis intensifies and the course towards industrialization and collectivization of agriculture is set in the second half of the 1920s. According to V.V. Kondrashin, during this period, in the arsenal of the means of struggle between the state and the community, the dominant position is occupied by the active intrusion of village councils into the sphere of land relations, enshrined in a number of legislative acts, and the radical change in the mechanism of self-taxation (self-financing) of the rural community. According to the decree of the Central Executive Committee and the Council of People’s Commissars of the USSR of August 24, 1927, the collection and spending of funds from self-taxation were removed from the jurisdiction of the community and transferred to the village councils. Land societies finally ceased to exist with the adoption of the decree of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee and the Council of People’s Commissars of the RSFSR of October 20, 1931.⁹⁹

One of the significant aspects of the problem is the evolution of the entire arsenal of the means of the social resistance of the community, including the most radical forms related to manifestations of social aggression. At certain stages of history, the extreme nature of peasant everyday life acted as the main channel of communication, taking the form of an invitation to a dialog or a barrier against the “invasion” of the state into the rural world. In other words, the institution of the community can be interpreted as a form of solidarity in social action and the organizing force of the peasant movement.¹⁰⁰

In this case, in a comparative analysis of the forms of peasant protest in the revolutionary period and in the conditions of the Civil War and the establishment of the Bolshevik regime, we will instead see the conditionality of the choice of certain behavioral strategies by specific historical conditions and tasks of social resistance rather than the traditional manifestation of the herd rage inherent in the community (in the sense of the senselessness and ruthlessness of the Russian revolt).

Undoubtedly, we must recognize the presence of elements of ritual practice, strategies developed by centuries-old traditions of worldly long-suffering and rampant elements, but the purpose and functionality of the rebellion will change in the context of the disintegration of power-subordination relations, the collapse of the monarchy, and with it the usual ways of

⁹² RSAE. F. 478. D. 7. V. 1334. P. 44.

⁹³ Karevsky F.A. The state of agriculture in the Middle Volga region in 1925–1927, pp. 122, 123.

⁹⁴ Yakhshiyani O.Yu., Sidorova G.M., and Kharichkin I.K. Op. cit., pp. 54–65.

⁹⁵ Yakhshiyani O.Yu., Sidorova G.M., and Kharichkin I.K. Op. cit. P. 62.

⁹⁶ Rosit D.P. Checking the work of the grassroots apparatus in the countryside: the main results of the check of the grassroots apparatus by members of the Central Control Commission of the RCP (Bolsheviks) in 12 districts and areas of the USSR. M., 1926. P. 10.

⁹⁷ Rosit D.P. Checking the work of the grassroots apparatus in the countryside: the main results of the check of the grassroots apparatus by members of the Central Control Commission of the RCP (Bolsheviks) in 12 counties and districts of the USSR. M., 1926. P. 15.

⁹⁸ Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RSASPH). F. 17. D. 60. V. 826. P. 142.

⁹⁹ Kondrashin V.V. Op. cit., pp. 207, 210.

¹⁰⁰ Kondrashin V.V. Op. cit. P. 205.

interaction. Thus, the materials of the clerical documentation of the regional administration of the period of the First Russian Revolution very clearly reproduce the repetition of rhythm and the change of phases in the self-development of the rebellion in each of the peasants' attacks on the manors' estates: "coordination" of actions, solidarity of community members; formation of the image of the object of aggression; imaginary sacrifice and provocative actions of the crowd; the formation of the mass and mass consciousness, generating a sense of omnipotence and justification, and, in contrast, suppressing the sense of responsibility; regulation of superstrong emotional states; and disintegration or self-disintegration of mass.¹⁰¹

We are talking here about a specific form of appeal to the highest authority, a message to the monarch, crying out about the existence of an insoluble problem, the desire to "knock on the door to heaven" through violence that is permissible and fair from the standpoint of community ethics, and limited in time and space by the ritual. However, the collapse of the monarchy, as noted above, did not cause confusion and perplexity among the peasantry. On the eve of sowing, the community publicly announced its claims to privately owned land at the provincial peasant congresses held in late March and early April 1917.

The implementation of the communal version of the "Truth" in a situation of anarchy led to the growth of support for pogroms and the replication of practices of uncontrolled aggression. As a result, by the autumn of 1917, the ritual of the rebellion was significantly formalized, the traditional order was violated, and the individual actions of the algorithm merged and overlapped each other. In the absence of the addressee, the meaning and goal-setting of social reactions are partially lost, and in the general set of behavioral stimuli, the magical punishment of the forces of evil coexists with unmotivated aggression. It is noteworthy that in Soviet historiography, the thesis about the decrease of the influence of peasant organizations and the growth of the spontaneity of the peasant movement in the autumn of 1917 was explained by the localization of the decision-making center at the level of village committees and peasant assemblies.¹⁰²

Describing the situation of 1918–1921, it is difficult to overestimate the degree of extremeness of the peasant everyday life, which was under the blow of the "military-communist experiment." The Bolshevik state unleashed an all-out war for resources, attacking the community with surplus appropriations, labor and horse-driven transport duties, and various kinds of

exactions. Arbitrariness and violence became the exclusive format for the transmission of political will and the establishment of a new government, which immediately provoked a response from the community across the entire spectrum of resistance: from its ordinary forms to social aggression. In this context, eschatological experiences, the ultimate state of psychological stress, and the realization of a real threat to the physical existence of each peasant family activated another form of armed resistance, recorded by the historical experience of secular community life: a form of lynching. According to this scenario, an uprising unfolded in the villages of B. Izhmora, M. Izhmora, Ushinka, Olshanka, and Klyuchi in Kerensky district in Penza province in February 1920, provoked by the duty of the rural population to provide a horse-driven transport service and the requisition of horses during the celebration of Maslenitsa. The arrival of a detachment of Red Army soldiers and the arrest of those suspected of agitation caused a real rebellion, culminating in the defeat of the regional food committee and the military commissariat, the murder of several Red Army soldiers and representatives of the soviet authorities, and the creation of a new government ("United Union of Labor Party"). The materials of the inquiry dispassionately reproduce elements of a specific form of "worldly" resistance, gravitating towards lynching: "Peasants began to gather for assemblies at the sound of the toll of the bell"; "it was decided at the assembly to resist"; "everyone, both women and children, took part in the defeat of the district committee"; and "during the robbery, the alarm was sounded."¹⁰³ In this respect, the mockery of the corpses of the victims of the peasant rebellion was not strikingly different from the cases of reprisals against horse thieves, thieves, and arsonists, which in traditional society was more the norm than an anomaly of rural everyday life.

As noted by V.V. Kondrashin, the history of the peasant movement can be imagined as a wave of cruel revenge of the peasants for the wrongs inflicted on them, and a revenge regulated by the norms and regulations of the communal organization. In particular, in the context of the explosive spread of the insurrectionary movement in 1920–1921, the decision to execute soviet activists was made by a village assembly, which determined the degree of guilt of each of the captured representative of the authorities.¹⁰⁴ Let us also note here the numerous cases when rural, and often volost, soviets became organizers and participants in peasant uprisings,¹⁰⁵ which testifies to the evolution of the system of self-organization of the Russian peasantry,

¹⁰¹ For details, see *Sukhova O.A.* Ten myths of peasant consciousness: Essays on the history of social psychology and the mentality of the Russian peasantry (the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries) based on materials from the Middle Volga region. M., 2008. P. 564.

¹⁰² *Pershin P.N.* Agrarian revolution in Russia. Vol. 1. M., 1966. P. 405.

¹⁰³ SAPR. F. R-473. D. 3, vv. 43, 43a, 43b.

¹⁰⁴ *Kondrashin V.V.* The Peasantry of Russia in the Civil War: On the Question of the Origins of Stalinism. M., 2009, pp. 297–298.

¹⁰⁵ *Kondrashin V.V.* The Peasantry of Russia in the Civil War: On the Question of the Origins of Stalinism. M., 2009, pp. 298–299.

which absorbed and adapted elements of external political control to its needs.

The sentencing practice of the assembly formed the legal field of the peasant war: the minutes of the general meeting formalized appeals to the authorities with calls “not to make arrests,” and to allow free trade;¹⁰⁶ and the same decision was required in the case of organizing armed resistance to the authorities. In March 1919, the peasants of the village of Tasholki (Melekesky district of Samara province) demanded that the citizens of the village of Aleksandrovka convene an assembly and adopt a resolution supporting the uprising: “... you must join the peasants of the surrounding villages who rebelled against soviet power.”¹⁰⁷ The position of the Alexandrov peasants did not differ in such extremism: “...at the assembly they said that if everything is calm in the volost, then the secretary should destroy the protocol. At the assembly, none of our peasants called for an uprising, but they said, including myself, that if it was confirmed that they had actually rebelled everywhere, then we would need to revolt. After the “ambassadors” returned and explained that “everything is calm in the volost”, then “the assembly declared that “ we will not join either” and demanded that the protocol be destroyed.”¹⁰⁸

The situation in the late 1920s in many ways appears to be a repetition of the experiment of the times of the Civil War and the final approval of the mobilization strategy, which had as its goal not so much the destruction of the community, but the suppression of any opportunities for self-organization of the peasantry. The main means in this relation was the policy of liquidating the kulaks, a policy of causing schisms and disintegration, disguised in the imaginary garb of the class struggle. That is why the wave of peas-

ant discontent that swept through the soviet countryside in 1930 quickly crashed at the foot of the collective farm system. After all, an artel of the early 1930s, a priori, was not intended to strengthen the solidarity system of social protection, but acted as an administrative incentive for the intensification of production and a way to optimize and withdraw resources. The hardships of the collective cultivation of public land and the fulfillment of state obligations in exchange for the right to use the estate and personal subsidiary plots could unite the peasants only in anticipation of the dissolution of collective farms and liberation from gratuitous, forced labor. In this context, the history of the Russian land community ended with the liquidation of the legal basis for the existence of land societies in the autumn of 1931.

FUNDING

This study was supported by the Russian Foundation for Basic Research as part of scientific project no. 21-09-43020: “Agrarian policy in the USSR and regional features of its implementation (1922–1991).”

OPEN ACCESS

This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license, and indicate if changes were made. The images or other third party material in this article are included in the article’s Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the article’s Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

¹⁰⁶State Archive of the Samara Region (SASamR). F. R-116. D. 1. V. 78. P. 7.

¹⁰⁷SASamR. F. R-116. D. 1. V. 40. P. 25.

¹⁰⁸SASamR. F. R-116. D. 1. V. 40. P. 25.